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DE RUEHGO #0304/01 0820424

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5891
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1375
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0234
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4508
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3803
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7329
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4881
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0074
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1084
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1099
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0929
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000304

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, G/AIAG;
PACOM FOR FPA;
USDA FOR FAS/PECAD, FAS/CNMP, FAS/AAD, APHIS;
BANGKOK FOR USAID:JMACARTHUR, APHIS:NCARDENAS, REO:JWALLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMESE AUTHORITIES RESPOND TO NEW AI CASES

REF: A. RANGOON 287
 [B.](#) RANGOON 284
 [C.](#) RANGOON 274

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[¶](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On March 21, after PCR testing, the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) publicly confirmed a March 18 outbreak of AI at a poultry farm in Rangoon Division (ref A). The GOB imposed stricter controls on the movement of people and poultry-related products in a six-kilometer radius around the recent outbreak sites, and into the nearby major poultry production area. No suspected human cases have been reported to date. Coordination has improved within the GOB, but the lack of a compensation scheme and weak biosecurity controls remain concerns. End summary.

Update on Recent Outbreak

[¶](#)2. (SBU) On March 21, the Livestock and Breeding Veterinary Department (LBVD) summarized the recent AI outbreak in poultry in the government newspaper. Outbreaks and culling occurred from February 28 through March 18 at four poultry farms in Rangoon Division. AI was suspected, but not confirmed, at a fifth, so authorities culled all poultry as a precautionary measure. Poultry die-offs included 1,863 chickens, guinea fowl, and quail. Officials destroyed the remaining 37,883 poultry, including ducks, on the affected farms. LBVD destroyed poultry at two additional farms as a control measure. Suspected sources of the infection include the sale of infected quail meat from a farm in one Rangoon Township, the use of contaminated egg trays or feed sacks, or visits to the farms of people from local bird markets.

UNICEF has begun to tailor public education materials to address specific concerns, such as proper disinfection of egg trays. The GOB has reported no suspected human cases to date.

¶3. (SBU) The LBVD Director General confirmed that his lab staff continues to "trace backward" from the farms to find the source of the virus, as recommended by FAO. He also noted that the GOB policy of "Early Detection, Early Protection, Early Prevention" can sometimes lead to actions taken with incomplete information. For example, after a poultry die-off, LBVD reacted quickly to cull flocks, sometimes before receiving PCR confirmation of AI. The task is made more difficult, he said, because of the lack of resources to compensate affected farmers. The LBVD does its best to re-supply the farmers with new stock, but does not have any other compensation plan.

Authorities Coordinate Better

¶4. (SBU) The LBVD DG said that the GOB would expand the ban on the movement of poultry-related products to include people and vehicles traveling to and from the affected areas. The GOB had also enlarged the control area to protect major poultry producers located north of the outbreaks. He noted that Rangoon Division administration officials assisted in maintaining the control and restricted zones. Enforcing the restrictions would not be possible without the support of Rangoon military and civilian authorities, he said, who asked for briefings and have participated in response activities.

¶5. (SBU) Our WHO and FAO contacts report that internal GOB coordination has improved. LBVD now updates Ministry of Health officials directly, and the GOB's daily AI meetings

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now include representatives of all government bodies and are chaired by Lt. General Myint Swe, not the Rangoon Division Commander. LBVD officials report that they receive regular inquiries and cooperation from higher authorities on steps necessary to contain the outbreak.

¶6. (SBU) FAO Country Director Tang Zhengping told us that he supported the control zones, but said they must be demarcated, patrolled and enforced more effectively, including added restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles. On March 22, Tang and the LBVD DG opened the first of two FAO-sponsored workshops for division-level veterinarians on "Biosecurity for Poultry Producers," led by FAO expert Larry Allen. In his opening speech, the LBVD DG said that the official reaction to last year's outbreak was too harsh on poultry producers and could have threatened food safety and food security. For these reasons, the official response to the current outbreak is more systematic, in an attempt to avoid the "extreme failure" of the poultry sector.

The focus of activities now, he said, is on biosecurity, to minimize the infection load.

¶7. (SBU) Tests at the Thai National Institute for Animal Health labs confirmed that two crows from Burma were positive for AI. The GOB has not announced this publicly, but the DG said that they understood the crows could be carriers, or were infected from eating AI-contaminated poultry. The LBVD observed no crow deaths near the site of the most recent outbreak. On March 21, the government newspaper warned of the possibility of future outbreaks, and urged greater awareness of poultry farmers.

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